



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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### INTERIOR SECRETARY LUJAN ANNOUNCES AGREEMENT TO INTENSIFY DEPARTMENT'S WETLANDS EFFORTS

Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan announced today that two agencies in his Department have signed a memorandum of understanding which will intensify Interior's effort to increase wetland breeding habitat for ducks, geese and other waterfowl.

The two agencies, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Reclamation, "are recognized experts in their respective fields--wildlife management and water resource management," Lujan said. "By combining their efforts we can greatly enhance our ability to provide both the water and the habitat development skills that are essential to increasing waterfowl populations in North America."

Lujan said the two agencies would be working under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, a 1986 agreement between the U.S. and Canada which provides for a "joint venture" approach using Federal, state, Native American and private partnerships to implement wetland habitat protection, restoration and management actions to benefit breeding and migrating birds.

John Turner, Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service said the agreement "gives us access to powerful new management tools to identify water resources and means of delivery that can protect existing wetlands and help restore areas that historically have been productive wetlands."

Dennis B. Underwood, Commissioner of Reclamation, said "we will begin immediately under this partnership to enhance and restore wetlands on the 8.5 million acres for which we have stewardship responsibility. As part of Reclamation's new mission, we will be providing water and water resource-related expertise to Federal and other agencies managing our nation's natural resources."

Lujan noted that the agreement "brings us closer to meeting President Bush's goal of 'no overall net loss of wetlands' and closer to a turnaround in the decline of migratory bird populations that has threatened a substantial part of our wildlife heritage."